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AMONG THE SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS OF SCOTLAND.

For a pleasant summer tour, few places are better than the Southern Highlands of Scotland. By this is not meant the more southerly district of the Highlands proper; but that great irregular belt of mountainous country stretching across the lower half of Scotland, from Portpatrick on the west coast to St Abb's Head on the east. It has been called the Southern Uplands of Scotland; but this expression is defective, and fails to convey an adequate idea of the real magnitude and extent of this mountainous region. At the place where these hills may be said to form the water-shed between the counties of Selkirk and Peebles on the north, and that of Dumfries on the south, the range culminates in a majestic congregation of mountain-summits, heaped and massed and mounded together, like the petrified billows of some antediluvian sea. To such as delight in scenery that blends within it something of the wildness and desolation of Alpine heights with the beauty and sweetness of pearly stream and tangled dell, the district referred to is sufficient to afford much pleasant gratification for many a quiet hour. Besides, if you are fond of ancient tradition and story, if you love to look upon scenes hallowed by their poetic or enriched by their romantic associations, you are in the very midst of them here.

But how, you ask, are we to reach the place? Nothing is easier. It lies on one of the best known and most frequented routes in the South of Scotland—a route that has been traversed times out of number by angler and sportsman, tourist and sightseer—by young poetic natures nursing their dreams of far-off distinction—by old men declining in the vale of life, wishful to bring back once more to their jaded hearts the youthful buoyancy, the delight in natural beauty, which they felt in the days of old. The route we refer to is that of the Yarrow and St Mary's Loch, connected by coach and rail with Moffat on the south, Selkirk

on the east, and Peebles and Innerleithen on the north; yet the ordinary tourists who frequent this route, know as a rule but little of the great tract of mountainous country of which we have been speaking. They pass through it without seeing it. They are perhaps satisfied—as who at a pinch would not?—with the sight of Yarrow flowing on in its hushed solemnity, as if the dead were near; of Mount Benger and Altrive, each for years the home of the Etrick Shepherd; of St Mary's Loch, shimmering in shine and shadow; of Tibbie Shiels's, of the Gray Mare's Tail, of Bodsbeck, of Craigieburn. But behind and beyond those flanking lines of picturesque heights that hem the valley in, is a vast region of mountainous territory, with sequestered glen and beetling cliff, limpid pool and roaring linn, grass-green holm and bracken-shaded brae.

The conquest of these hills is not only possible, but comparatively easy to those who choose to put up for a few days at any one of the numerous places which may serve as headquarters during operations. But before proceeding to notice these, a few words of advice to the tourist may not be amiss. In the first place, in attempting a tour among hills, do not go alone; have in any case one companion, if not more. Second, let such luggage as you carry be light and useful—a suit of water-proofs, an extra pair of stockings, and a change of flannels, are enough for a few days' tour. Heavy knapsacks, with elaborate appliances for outdoor dining and all such luxuries, are mere bits of mountaineering foppery, and should be discarded. He travels best who travels light. Take sandwiches or other eatables with you in the morning to suffice till you reach your destination in the afternoon or evening; and with your little wardrobe made up in a small parcel and slung over your shoulder, you may travel easily and travel far. In the third place, you ought to have with you an Ordnance or other good map of the district to be traversed, on a scale not less than a half-inch to the mile, and shewing all the streams that descend from the hills, as also the lines of contour. A pocket-compass and guide-

book, both easily acquired, should not be forgotten.

To reach this land of mountain and moor, pleasant dell and meandering brook, it will be necessary to leave the beaten track of the tourist, and to make your way over the lofty ridges that are seen from the valley of St Mary's or of Moffat Water. This may be done also from other points. From Peebles, you may proceed up the valley of the Manor, visiting by the way the grave and cottage of 'Bow'd Davie,' the prototype of Scott's Black Dwarf. This valley contains some of the finest mountain scenery in the South of Scotland, rising into a kind of gloomy magnificence as you approach the higher reaches of the stream, where it issues forth from deep dark gullies, narrow and steep, leading with tortuous winding up into the high hills beyond. To reach St Mary's Loch from this point you may follow various routes; the simplest perhaps is to walk up Glenrath till you reach the water-shed leading on to Blackhouse Heights, whence you will see before you Douglas Burn flowing away down to the Yarrow. Or you may reach this water-shed by Innerleithen and the Quair, instead of by Peebles and the Manor Water. Either route is a good one; the former having the advantage of being the shorter of the two to the Loch. It leads from the supposed locality of *St Ronan's Well*, by the ancient residence of the Earls of Traquair, and up the 'long glen' which tradition associates with William Laidlaw's plaintive song of *Lucy's Flittin'*. Once on the water-shed above mentioned, it is in your option either to keep along the ridge to Blackhouse Heights, or immediately to descend into the Black Cleuch, and thus reach the Douglas Burn, whose exit from between the hills is at a point within easy access of the Gordon Arms in the one direction, and of Tibbie Shiels's (St Mary's Cottage) in the other, at either of which places excellent accommodation is to be had. In walking down the Douglas Burn, you will pass the ruins of the old tower of Blackhouse, the original seat of the Douglasses in this quarter, and the scene of the tragedy of *Lord William and Lady Margaret*, one of the most darkly romantic of Border ballads. Blackhouse is further of interest as being the farm long tenanted by the family of William Laidlaw, above referred to, the warm and attached friend and amanuensis of Sir Walter Scott. It was here, in one of his 'Border raids' for ballads, that Scott first met James Hogg, who had previously been a shepherd for ten years on this farm, which is the scene of his graphic description of a terrible snow-storm that occurred in the winter of 1794. From Peebles or Innerleithen to St Mary's Loch by this route is a fair day's walk; and if you are an angler, and start betimes in the morning, so as to afford yourself the necessary leisure, you may pick up a nice basket of trout in the course of your journey.

To explore the hills that hang around St Mary's Loch, either the Gordon Arms or St Mary's Cottage will be suitable as headquarters, and from them excursions may be made up the Meggat Water to Cramalt, the hunting residence of the old Scottish kings, and on the way to which the ruins of Henderland Castle, the scene of *The Border Widow's Lament*, is passed. Or you may strike south across the hills, and spend a day in exploring the valley of the Ettrick, and

visiting Tushielaw, and Thirlestane Castle and Thirlestane Mill, all places familiar to the readers of Hogg's writings. Or if you wish to go higher into the hills, then Birkhill, about four miles beyond Tibbie Shiels's, will afford comfortable quarters, and place you in the very centre of the wildest of the Southern Highlands. Here, as a matter of course, a visit will be made to the Gray Mare's Tail, foaming down its gloomy chasm of rock; but not so many turn aside to see an equally striking place, namely, Dobb's Linn. It is a wild spot, the meeting-point of two or three hill-streams, that have cut their way deep down through successive strata of black shale, making terrific gashes in the steep hill-side. Where the harder basaltic rock obtrudes, and has resisted the disintegrating force of the water, fine falls have been formed, one of these being famous in the district, as also to the readers of *The Brownie of Bodsbeck*, as the place where two zealous Covenanters wrestled with and vanquished the Evil One, casting him over the linn; but who, to save himself from the natural consequences of such a fall, became immediately transformed into a bundle of hides, and thus accomplished the descent without fatal results. This is the haunt of scores of geologists; and eminent names may be found in the visitors' book at Birkhill, where for many years 'Kind Jenny' was the beneficent rival of Tibbie Shiels, of St Mary's Cottage lower down the valley—both, alas! with all their humble excellences of character, passed away. The black shale beds at Dobb's Linn belong to the fossiliferous deposits of the Silurian system, and are rich in graptolites—may be said indeed to swarm with them; and one who can use the hammer, and has a true scent for such game, may soon carry away a boxful of specimens.

Then, a visit to 'Dark Loch Skene' is a memory of itself. The experience of Sir Walter Scott in visiting this place has been the experience of many others—it is a land of fog and solitude and desolation, and some caution requires to be used by the tourist who tempts its waste of bogs and quaking morass. But the sight, to the lover of scenery that is wild, yet majestic in its wildness, is such as more than repays the trouble of reaching it. The description given by one of Scott's companions of the visit made by him is applicable still, with the exception of the eagle, which has now disappeared from the rocky islet in the lake which a pair of these birds were said to have frequented. 'In our ascent to the lake,' says the writer referred to, 'we got completely bewildered in the thick fog that generally envelops the rugged features of that lonely region; and as we were groping through the maze of bogs, the ground gave way, and down went horse and horsemen pell-mell into a slough of peaty mud and black water, out of which, entangled as we were with our plaids and floundering nags, it was no easy matter to get extricated. Indeed, unless we had prudently left our gallant steeds at a farm-house below, and borrowed hill ponies for the occasion, the result might have been worse than laughable. As it was, we rose like the spirits of the bog, covered *cap-à-pie* with slime, to free themselves from which our wily ponies took to rolling about on the heather, and we had nothing for it but following their example. At length, as we approached the gloomy loch, a huge

eagle heaved himself from the margin, and rose right over us, screaming his scorn of the intruders; and altogether it would be impossible to picture anything more desolately savage than the scene which opened, as if raised by enchantment on purpose to gratify the poet's eye; thick folds of fog rolling incessantly over the face of the inky waters, but rent asunder, now in one direction, and then in another, so as to afford us a glimpse of some projecting rock or naked point of land, or island bearing a few scraggy stumps of pine, and then closing again in universal darkness upon the cheerless waste. Much of the scenery of *Old Mortality* was drawn from that day's ride.

From Birkhill also, another pleasant journey may be taken eastward to the head of the Ettrick—to Ettrick village, where Hogg was born, and to the churchyard where he sleeps. Then, when you are satisfied with your excursions from this centre, you may start some morning early, and ascending the White Coomb to the south of Loch Skene, pass downward by Gameshlope Burn and Talla Water till you reach the Crook Inn, on the Tweed. In this journey, much of the most characteristic scenery of the district is to be witnessed. The numerous mountain-heights heaving their rounded summits up to the sky, or, as is more rare, presenting to the elements a rugged front of impregnable rock; the deep dark glens on every side—some of them, like that below the Carifran Gans, terrible to look into; the great hollow basins between the hills filled with miles on miles of unproductive bog, black and desolate, cracked and rifted in every direction, and veiling under its treacherous covering of gray mosses many deep and dangerous quagmires and sloughs. In moving through these, the pedestrian has to exercise much care, and would act more wisely by walking round than through them, even at the sacrifice of a little additional time and labour.

Though there is, in one sense, a certain uniformity in the character of the scenery, yet this is by no means unpleasant, as the devious windings of the elevated tracks through which you wander are ever opening up fresh effects, and giving now and again delightful glimpses of the sunlit summits above or the shadowy glens below. Professor Geikie, referring to this peculiarity, says: 'There is something irresistibly attractive in the green monotony of these lonely hills, with their never-ending repetitions of the same pasture-covered slopes, sweeping down into the same narrow valleys, through which, amid strips of fairy-like meadow, the same clear stream seems ever to be murmuring on its way beside us. There is a tenderness in the landscape that, in place of subduing and overawing us, calls forth a sympathy which, though we cannot perchance tell why it should be given, we can hardly refuse to give. It may be, indeed, that with this feeling human associations have much to do; for all this wide region of hill and valley is a part of that Border country which has been hallowed by song and story.'

Once within the hospitable shade of the Crook Inn, on the high-road to Moffat, the pedestrian may think he has had enough of the hills; if, however, he is still unsatisfied, then he may start for the source of the Tweed on the one hand, or to Culter Fell and the Broad Law on the other; while within easy distance he has such places of

historic or poetic interest as Logan Lea, The Bield, Oliver Castle, Polmood, and Linkumoddie, 'where Willie Wastle dwelt on Tweed;' or such places of tragic association as the Hunter's Well, at the head of Kingledores. He may also find occupation for many a delightful hour in exploring the numerous little glens of romantic beauty which here open upon the valley of Tweed. And when he is satisfied with his work, or time presses, he can find his way back, partly by road and partly by rail, to Moffat, or Peebles, or Innerleithen, whence he started. Such a journey as we have indicated, if attended with due care, and pursued with becoming leisure, may be found very full of much that is pleasurable and health-giving, both to body and mind.

A LIFE'S ATONEMENT.

CHAPTER XXXI.—HISTORY.

Lived like an anchorite, and worked like an apostle.

CHANGES fell upon Bolter's Rents, and it was known to the people of that dismal region that the proprietary of the court had changed hands. There are grades of respectability. There were people even in Bolter's Rents who formed a sort of local gentry by contrast with their surroundings. To these, and to all with a remnant of decency, the alterations instituted by the new proprietor were matter for almost unmixed congratulation. But there lurked in that foul den, known to the police, scores of old criminals and young ones, burglars, pickpockets, shop-lifters, utterers of base coin—a terrible tribe. These marauders were all of too low a class in their own profession to be able to hold their own in it, and some of their time was spent in the performance of casual honest work. Amongst the more prosperous scoundrels who lived in better lodgings, they were known contemptuously as 'ale-and-porterers,' a term used by the British thief to signify people who are occasionally forced by pressure of poverty into honesty's ways. The true professional criminal despises that sort of person, just as an honest mechanic does, and for the same reason—namely, that the person lives in a constant base desertion of principle. The only difference is—though it may be confessed to be considerable—that the mechanic's principle is industry, and the scoundrel's laziness. Now and again, an aristocrat amongst the 'smashers' or the 'cracksmen' hid himself in Bolter's Rents, and was unearthed by the vigilance of the police; but the predatory creatures who regularly dwelt there were amongst the meanest even of their own mean kind. To them the proceedings of the new proprietor did not seem an unmixed good. A sort of informal official, whom the police were always ready to support, dwelt in the place after its first purification by whitewash; and all who lived disorderly, were by him despatched to seek a residence elsewhere. The leaning walls were straightened by huge hulks of timber—the broken floors and windows and roofs were all repaired, and every room was scoured weekly. For this, some dozen charwomen, who lived in the court, and had hitherto starved, were engaged, and by it they made a plentiful living. Some of the indwellers fiercely resented the advent of soap and water and white-wash; and one hunchbacked hermit of a crossing-

sweeper, who had been born forty years before in the room he lived in, and had never seen it scoured in all his life, repelled the intruding charwoman with his besom, and threatened to be the death of anybody who laid a scrubbing-brush upon the time-consecrated filth of his apartment. Him the informal official grimly 'chucked out' until such time as the ancient solitary reign of dirty chaos should be molested. The hunchback bore it better afterwards, though he took an Englishman's privilege, and grumbled, declaring that since these new ways came in, Bolter's Rents was no place for a decent man to live in. The new proprietor, who was a gentleman with one arm, interviewed this original, and was so charmed with him, that he gave him half-a-crown, though he refused to adopt his principles with regard to sanitation.

The new proprietor indeed was in and out of the place all day at first; and was so excessively liberal with his money, that Bolter's Rents rose at him almost to an infant, and begged of him and lied to him with such persistent fluency that he avoided the place afterwards, until the official he had appointed had grubbed out the most poisonous of the human weeds, and little but honest poverty dwelt within the walls of those tumble-down old buildings. Hastings was very tender at first about throwing the thieves adrift. 'Poor beggars!' he said, talking the matter over with the Doctor. 'What *can* they do but prey upon society? If I take your advice, a score of them will be homeless to-morrow. I do not care to be followed by the curses even of such a little drab of a shop-lifter as that we saw this morning. Why not let them stay?'

'As I am an honest man,' proclaimed the Doctor, 'you sicken me. Whoso gives knowing shelter to a criminal, gives countenance to crime, and stands responsible for it in the sight of God and man. If there were no thieves' shelters, there would be no thieves.'

'A good round sentence, Doctor,' said Hastings, laughing; 'but a shaky aphorism.'

'When a man speaks earnestly,' said the Doctor, 'he speaks broadly. And the Flippancies—of whom there are too many—take truths broadly stated, put a strained meaning on them, and lightly set them down as lies.'

'I am none of your Flippancies,' responded Hastings. 'I am a Social Reformer, and the proprietor of Bolter's Rents—wherefore let the wise and gentle pity me. Doctor, I pity a scoundrel more than an honest man who is in trouble.'

'Do you?' said the Doctor.

'I do. Because he is a scoundrel. Think, Doctor, what a terrible thing it is to be a scoundrel by nature. How would you like to be a shop-lifter? I tell you, sir, the doom of these poor thieves is tragic.'

'You are right,' said the Doctor. 'Let us go out and form a Thieves' Phalanstery, where pick-pockets shall eat turtle and drink Burgundy, and burglars shall go attired in purple and fine linen, and every man shall have full right to rob his neighbour.'

'When a man speaks earnestly, Doctor,' Hastings answered, with a quiet twinkle in his eyes, 'he speaks broadly. And the Flippancies—of whom there are too many—take truths broadly stated, and'—

'Go to Bath!' cried the Doctor, laughing.

'No,' said Hastings—'to extremes.'—The Doctor laughed again; and Hastings added: 'You are right; but I have some right on my side too. It is a pitiful business; and I am very sorry for the poor wretches, and could almost find it in my heart to bribe them into honesty, rather than try to whip them there.'

'Bribes make no man true!' said the Doctor.

'Nor stripes either,' added Hastings.

'They teach at least that first stern and necessary lesson, that the way of transgressors is hard.'

'Ay!' said Hastings, with more feeling than he commonly displayed; 'their way is hard. Poor transgressors! Heaven help them!'

These talks did good to each of them, and advanced the scheme they both had at heart; and though the Doctor often laughed at the owner of Bolter's Rents, and often with him, the wildest theories that young gentleman broached had always a kernel of good sense and feeling. And the Doctor in his turn, whilst Hastings softened his sterner creed somewhat, bullied the younger man out of most of his extravagances; until between them, with the Doctor's wife to lend a helping hand, Bolter's Rents was transformed to an abode of honest and cleanly poverty.

And Hastings had no more effective coadjutor in all this than his old friend Frank Fairholt, whom he thought he had buried years ago in the Crimea. If one good deed, as Portia sweetly said, shines in this naughty world, as wide as the light which burned at home to welcome her, Frank's blameless life shone like a beacon in the Cimmerian darkness of Bolter's Rents. Had one blackguard dared to insult the quiet, shrinking, broken, ever-helpful man, another blackguard would have been there to knock his fellow-scoundrel down. Though amongst them, not of them, nor like them in ways or speech, he helped the poverty-stricken, nursed the sick, did a thousand menial gentle offices, was tireless for good, lived like an anchorite, and worked like an apostle. Deep in the ruffian hearts of this abominable crew, his tender and persistent gentleness was cherished in the one honest spot which generations of vice had bequeathed to them. His pitiful charity fell, like heaven's light and rain, upon the just and the unjust. He lost two days' work at one time in nursing a desperado through an attack of delirium tremens; and the man, who was the terror of the court, loved him at the bottom of his ugly nature—as a bulldog loves his master, with a regard which only shews itself by tearing the master's enemies.

It had chanced one night long before Hastings became the owner of this unpromising property, that the statuesque policeman whom he had met there on his first visit, stood posturing with lumpy grace at the entrance to Bolter's Rents, gazing with a placid grandeur of demeanour down Oxford Street. A woman stood a little way within the entrance with her hands beneath a tattered apron. Frank came up in the twilight, and the policeman and the woman each had to make way for him. The officer recognised him, and in his curiosity at finding him so far afield from his labours, his dignity relaxed, and he said, 'Hillo, my good woming!' in a lordly condescending tone, and beckoned the woman with a Berlin-gloved forefinger. 'Do you know the party as just went

down?' the Peeler queried when the woman came to him.

'Yes sir,' said the woman. 'Leastways, he lives here, as I believe; but I don't know no harm agen him.'

'Has he lived here long?' continued the guardian of the peace, interrogating.

'I've on'y been here three 'ears myself, sir; but he was here when I come.'

'Egstronary!' said the officer in reverie. 'He works five mile off at the Docks. They calls him "The Duke" and "Your Grace," down there.'

'I'm told he's quite the gentleman, sir,' the woman responded, tremulously grateful for the official's urbanity.

'They say,' said the policeman, who found his beat dull, and was glad to unbend—as a Prince, suffering from *ennui*, might care for once in a way to converse with a ploughman—they say as he was wuth 'alf-a-millying o' money at one time, an' lost it on the Derby. What's the name he goes by?'

'Jones, I believe, sir,' said the woman respectfully.

'Ah!' continued the official, scraping his chin with his thumb and finger—an act in which the stipendiary magistrate of his own court looked unusually magisterial—'same party, I make no doubt. Good-night.' The officer swung with majestic even tread along the pavement; and the woman looked after him admiringly, recalling the time when her Joe was just such a fine figure of a man. And in this wise the fact and the fable about Frank had followed him to Bolter's Rents. All minds, cultivated or vulgar, have a liking for romance; and Frank became after this an embodiment of mystery to many of the people who surrounded him; and some of the women were persuaded that the title by which he was known had once of right belonged to him. Altogether, he was the one remarkable figure in the place; and Hastings heard much of him, and was interested in him. Frank in his turn heard of the new proprietor with a terror and a longing which struggled against each other. Had he lived beyond the extremest span of human years, it is not probable that his horror of his own crime would have perceptibly fallen from that level flood of shame and loathing which had washed his heart ever since his return to London. The storm whose violence had driven those terrible waters over him, had died away, and they were calm now; but he lay drowned in a living death below them. But since he had been so long undiscovered, and had grown so changed, his fears had learned to sleep, until on the night when he was nursing his old enemy, the friend who had thrown him into his enemy's hands appeared beside him. Then they started up, wide-eyed and quivering. They grew so morbid, that he was afraid even to run away, lest the act should awake suspicion. The danger as it seemed to grow nearer, fascinated him, as some snakes fascinate birds, until it seemed almost to drag him into Hastings' way. He had wearied Mrs Brand's determined efforts to conciliate him; for he had never, since the only occasion on which I have shewn them together, so much as answered her a word, though she had approached him often. A score of people whom he had known, knew Dr Brand, and his unreasoning fears kept him at this distance from her, sorely against

his will. His obstinate silence puzzled her the more, that she heard continually of his goodness.

'He would only answer me in German,' Hastings said, when, with the Doctor's wife, he stumbled upon this subject of common interest.

'In German?' asked Mrs Brand. 'He speaks English beautifully. I don't mean that he speaks English beautifully as a foreigner might, but that he speaks it like an English gentleman. The people call him "The Duke," and are full of stories of his generosity and tenderness. Some of the women have cried to me in talking about him and his kindness.'

'I confess to a share of curiosity in this mystery,' said the Doctor from his armchair, for it was evening, and his day's work was over. 'I don't place much reliance on that sort of legend; but the people in the Rents are all ready to swear that he had a great fortune and lost it by gambling. If the man is a gentleman, I can understand his reticence. If I were brought down to such a position, I should not be inclined to accept the patronage of any lady or gentleman, however kindly disposed it might be.'

'Nor I either,' said Hastings. 'But if we could get him into co-operation with us, he might help us, and might do himself a great deal of service too. You must allow me to try him, Mrs Brand.'

'Pray, do,' cried the little lady. 'But be careful not to go too far. He has spoken to me once only, and then he told me, in a weary sort of way, which I can't at all describe or imitate, that he had but one thing left in the world, and that was his solitude, and that if I persisted in speaking to him, he should be driven to leave the place.'

'He hasn't left?' inquired the Doctor briefly.

'No,' said Mrs Brand; 'but he has never spoken to me since.'

'I must try him,' said Hastings; and learning, by inquiry at the Rents, when the object of his search was generally to be found at home, he sought him on the following Sunday afternoon. The faithful Ali followed his master up the winding stair; but at a signal from his hand, remained without the room. Hastings rapped; and the voice which cried 'Come in,' made his foot pause at the threshold. The voice awoke no memory, though it might well have awakened many; but it brought a strange mood to Hastings—a mood which most people have known at one time or another. The time, the darkened stair, the light within the room, the tawny face beside him in the shadow, his errand there, the voice—all seemed familiar to him. He seemed to know what would meet him within, and what would be said and done, as though this were a re-acting of the doings of a former life, and he remembered just this fragment of it. He entered with this mood upon him.

There sat before him on a rough bench near the window a man who looked past middle age, and yet prematurely old; by which I mean that you would have said he looked seventy, but could not be more than five-and-fifty. His long hair, which curled inwards at the ends, was silver white; but the beard which flowed from throat and cheek and chin had still a few jet black hairs in it, and the heavy moustache which drooped above his lips was scarcely gray. The arched black eyebrows marked the face in a singular way, and the pathetic eyes held a most memorable sorrow. All this

Hastings had time to notice as he stepped from the shadow into the light. He could not fail to see the look of terror which took the place of sadness in the man's eyes as he advanced, nor could he fail to be surprised at the sudden drooping of the head, and the silence, undisturbed except by his laboured breathing, with which the man encountered him.

'Forgive me,' said Hastings, advancing a little further, 'for intruding on you. I am afraid I startled you.' He paused for an answer, but none came. 'Won't you ask me to sit down?' he said a minute later. The lodger, with his chin still crushing his beard against his breast, spoke not a word, but waved his hand towards an unoccupied bench at the far end of the room. Hastings drew the rough seat towards the light, and for a time kept silence, not well knowing what to say. He felt that there was nothing sullen in the silence which confronted him, and he was disposed to be patient with the unreasonable fear which made the man shrink away. 'I must ask you not to think that I am intruding,' he said at length, a little disconcerted by the other's passivity. 'The fact is, I bought this place some time ago, and ever since I have been trying to make it decent. You have been working at that task longer than I have, and I want for one thing to thank you for it. You have done good work here—manly work. You've been very kind to these poor beggars, and I am personally obliged to you.'

The lodger's irresponsive silence built a wall about him. He did not move, and only his breathing, which was agitated and uneven, shewed that he was alive. Hastings sat discomfited, regarding him keenly all the time, and almost gave up his attack already. But as he regarded the shrinking figure and the bent head, a pang of sympathy and pity shot through his heart, and he discerned a tragedy. The vague tales which were afloat about the man indicated a surprising folly; but Hastings was one who had a great deal of sympathy with a certain sort of fool. So far as the stories told of his strange tenant might be true, the follies therein set down were so like the madness of his own youth, that he could not be pitiless with them; and the man's charity to the poor in his own poverty, and his unostentatious and continual patient tending of the sick, seemed to bespeak a very fine and lovable nature. Under the pressure of this new feeling, Hastings spoke again.

'You have done much for the cause I have at heart. Let me do something for you.'—A motion of the listener's hand waved him back from that theme in such a fashion as to bring a blush to his face.—'No,' he said, hurried into saying more than he had meant to say in the eagerness of his explanation; 'I am not insulting you by offering charity. I want a *quid pro quo*. I want to offer you an engagement, which will suit you better than your work at the Docks, and be more congenial to you. I want you to act as my almoner amongst the poor here, if you will. I want you to distribute relief among them, and to live with them as you are doing now. I must find somebody to do the work, and I shall get nobody who knows the people and their wants as you do. They know better than tell lies to you, for you know all about them.'

Frank sat before him motionless and speechless.

'Does he know?' he thought; 'and will he not appear to know? Is this his way of trying to lift me from wretchedness? He recognised Tasker. He himself is changed, and I knew him. Does he know me? Has he discovered all?'

Had he dared, how he could have cast himself before his friend! But there is no space in material nature, though fancy reach from limit to limit of the starry hosts, which can do more than image the gulf which seemed to stretch between them.

'Every man,' said Hastings, resolving not to be beaten by this silence, 'has his rights, and one of yours is to order me out of your place if you want me gone. So long as you rent this room, it belongs of course to you, and not to me. You want quiet; you hate to be intruded upon. Well, you shall have your way. I'll tell you what you shall do, if you like. You shall have a messenger to go between you and Mrs Brand, and none of us will trouble you. I'll get some furniture sent in here, and make you a little more comfortable; and you shall just go about among the people and see to them, and do what you can for them. If any of them cannot possibly pay their rent, your statement shall be a sufficient acquittance of their liability; and if any deserving person is in want of food or medicine, or fire or clothes, you shall get what is wanted at my charges; but you must be down like a hammer on idleness and pretence. You shall set all your expenses down; and Mrs Brand will see that the money has been properly expended. That will be only fair to you, of course, and will be quite proper and business-like into the bargain. Now, what do you say?'

He said nothing. He listened to the tones of his old friend; and though the flippancy which had marked them once had vanished altogether, he knew that he could have sworn to the voice with absolute certainty, and he would not trust his own even with a word, lest it should betray him. He was not sure of the truth, but he was almost sure, and Hope came hand in hand with Belief to persuade him that he was not recognised.

'If you do not care to give me an answer, now,' Hastings went on with a gentle patience which surprised his listener, 'you can send me word when you like. Or I will call for your decision this day week. That shall be the arrangement. If you do not send to me before Sunday next, I will come here for your answer. Good afternoon.'

Still no answer came; and with a repetition of his farewell, Hastings left the garret; and the faithful Ali came out of his dusky corner and followed him down-stairs, into the street, and home. Frank was greatly shaken by the interview. Whilst Hastings spoke, his own struggling griefs and longings took him by the throat so strongly, that the force by which he held his peace and made no sign exhausted him, and he sat trembling with hysteric tears after his friend's departure. He thought of the proposal Hastings had made, and his own way seemed clear to him. Whatever duty declared itself, *that* must he do, and no other, until it should be done and life should be over. The way was open to him; and before the end of the week came, he spoke to Penkridge.

'Go to the landlord, and tell him from me that

I will undertake the work he offers. Tell him I shall have time enough to see to it all when my work at the Docks is over. Tell him also that I only undertake it on this condition—that I am left alone. If any attempt is made to intrude upon my quiet, I will go away.

Penkridge, who had little enough good left in him, had at least some sentiment of gratitude, and Frank had done so much for him, that he was his willing servant. He needed to have the message again and again repeated, but having at last mastered it, he delivered it faithfully; and Hastings sent back word that his strange tenant's wishes should be respected. There grew up in Bolter's Rents a power for good which worked amazingly. The almoner of the rich man's bounty had a heart and hand for it, and his charities were done charitably. Many forlorn ones heard their first word of human comfort from Frank's lips, and the gladness he brought to others was reflected upon himself. And although his burden was one which must needs be borne until the restful breast of Mother Earth closed over it and him, he grew slowly to a strength which was equal to his day, and Peace dwelt with him, mournful-eyed.

THE FORTHCOMING CENSUS.

In 1881 we are to have another Census, another numbering of the people. Without entering upon the consideration of long rows of figures, we are desirous of explaining how the census is taken. Many thousands of the present readers of this *Journal* were too young ten years ago to have read much about these matters. To them the information will be welcome; while adults generally are perhaps not fully up in the subject.

The first thing done is to obtain a special Act of Parliament. The powers intrusted to the Commissioners are too large to be exercised without this express sanction; and therefore the government for the time being prepare a Bill, which becomes an Act when it has passed through all its stages in both Houses of Parliament. Such was the course pursued in 1801, 1811, and 1821; then again in 1831, 1841, and 1851; and next in 1861 and 1871. Usually two or three statutes are necessary; for Scotland and Ireland require rather a different arrangement of details from that of England and Wales. To describe briefly the latter mode only will suffice for our present purpose; and to take the actual proceedings of 1871 as a tolerably close approximation to that which we may expect in 1881.

The Act empowers the Crown to appoint Commissioners, usually three in number; the Registrar-general of Births, Marriages, and Deaths is the chief, while the others are able and experienced men. The fifty-two counties of England and Wales are grouped into twelve Divisions—Wales forming one and Yorkshire another, all the others comprising a few counties each. The divisions are split up into Superintendent Registration Districts, and these into Sub-districts, containing all the multitudinous hundreds, tythings, townships, cities, towns, parishes, villages, hamlets, &c. The whole comprise so many small patches of land, that more than thirty thousand enumerators are employed to attend to them. It is necessary that the census should be taken

on one particular day throughout the kingdom; and in order to do this, the enumerators have to prepare matters beforehand. They are required to make themselves acquainted, each in his own locality, with every street and court, every village and hamlet, every cottage and homestead, every barn and hut in which human beings might perchance sleep. It was in this way that the Commissioners for 1871 obtained the names of upwards of three thousand districts, sub-districts, boroughs, cities, towns, villages, hamlets, hundreds, &c. The police everywhere rendered assistance in ferreting out and enumerating the homeless poor; the managers of all kinds of asylums supplied the necessary information concerning the temporary or permanent inmates; the Admiralty made the proper returns for the seamen of the royal navy, whether on home or foreign stations; the Horse Guards did the like in regard to the Queen's soldiers; the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs undertook the necessary inquiries touching British subjects abroad; while the Registrar-general of Merchant Seamen, aided by the Custom-house officers, did what was necessary in regard to the mercantile marine.

The enumerators voluntarily offered their services—no compulsion being used in the matter. They were required to be intelligent, trustworthy, active; to write a legible hand; to be tolerably healthy; and to be prudent and civil in manner; of any age between eighteen and sixty-five. They comprised among them many clergymen and other ministers of religion, clerks, and persons in various stations of life—including a few ladies, who are reported to have done their work well. They were paid by a fixed sum—one guinea—for the routine of duty, besides so much for every hundred schedules delivered and received.

Census night has usually been fixed for a Sunday night, because on that night all the scattered members of a family are most likely to be at home. The appointed enumerators are busily engaged for some days beforehand in the house-to-house delivery of schedules or census papers, in order that they may make the house-to-house collecting on the following Monday. There being something under forty million acres in England and Wales, and something over thirty thousand enumerators to attend to it, this would give more than a thousand acres on an average for each. But this is by no means the plan on which the system is managed. An acre of ground in the densely populated portions of London, Liverpool, and other large cities, contains a vast number of houses and inhabitants; whereas in remote country districts dwellings and people are alike few—in Anglesea, for instance, where there are less than four inhabitants per average acre. In towns the dwellers are too numerous to be counted by one enumerator except in a very small area; whereas in the regions of mountain and moor many miles would have to be trudged to hunt out a very small number of persons. In one enumerator's district there were found to be only sixty souls, all told; whereas at the other extreme an enumerator had to give an account of nearly five thousand persons. The Commissioners make allowance for all these things in forming their arrangements. We say 'trudged,' for the enumerators cannot always afford to ride or drive, even if roads of any kind reached the secluded mountain homes,

which is by no means always the case. Difficult enough the work frequently is; for in many small towns the streets are not named, nor the houses numbered. The local postman perchance lends a little help in this matter. Nor is danger altogether absent; seeing that, besides encountering rough and brutal people, the enumerators may happen to enter houses where small-pox, typhus, or other dangerous disease is or has been at work. The enumerators therefore consider themselves to be underpaid; and many persons admit the justice of the statement.

The experiences of the enumerators in 1871 were—as in previous articles we have shewn—in many instances curious and amusing, arising partly from the ignorance and partly from the distrust or prejudice of the householders. Some of the schedules, when filled up, were sent *privately* to the Registrar-general in London, in order to avoid the eyes of the enumerators in country districts—especially on the delicate subject of the real age of spinsters. This irregularity was condoned by the Commissioners in special instances. An elderly single lady, somewhat wealthy, fastened up the door and windows of her house, forbidding access to the enumerator; declaring that even a fine of twenty pounds would not induce her to give him the required particulars. In reply, however, to a soothing letter, she sent her filled-up schedule privately to the chief Commissioner. A gentleman of landed property declared he would pay a fine of any amount, indeed would rather cease to exist, than commit the offence for which David suffered, as recorded in the Old Testament—'Numbering the people.' His religious scruples were respected; and the particulars of his family were obtained with tolerable accuracy by other means. One enumerator was insulted and assaulted by a morose householder, so much so that he summoned the man before a magistrate, who inflicted a fine. A middle-aged man was fined one pound and costs by the Devon county magistrates for refusing to fill up a census paper for himself and his child; nor placed that he knew neither his own name nor place of birth correctly, and he would not perjure himself by making a false entry. At St Austell in Cornwall, a gentleman possessed of considerable property refused to allow the schedule to be taken into his household; for which he was summoned and fined. An author wrote in one of the schedule columns, 'Wife says I am both idiot and lunatic.' Many other rural districts in England and Wales presented similar instances. In Scotland, where the inhabitants of some of the secluded districts know little about any other language than Gaelic, they were often greatly puzzled as to what the whole affair meant. So much was this kind of difficulty felt in Wales, that some of the schedules were printed in the Welsh language, for distribution in localities almost denuded of English-speaking people. In Ireland, poor Pat in many cases was made seriously uneasy by a doubt whether a census might possibly mean more taxes and rates, a raising of his rent or a curtailment of political, social, and religious privileges—regarded by him as being too restricted already.

Railway officials must give in lists of persons travelling on the various lines; captains of ships report who have been at sea; barges and boats

have to be visited; gipsy encampments and travelling caravans are not neglected. Dark arches, to be found in some of the large cities and towns, are sometimes used as sleeping-places by the wretched and homeless; and so are barns, haystacks, brick-fields, and underneath carts and wagons. One enumerator found a boy soundly sleeping in a hollow iron garden roller! These exceptional instances were over and above the regular householders, to whom no less than five million schedules or printed forms were delivered: divided into separate columns for pen or pencil entries as to names, ages, sex, occupation, and many other particulars, which the householder was bound to fill up to the best of his ability, under penalty of a fine.

It may serve to elucidate one of the reasons why night is selected for taking the census rather than the day, that some great towns are visited every day by scores of thousands of persons who do not reside there. 'The streets of the City of London,' said the Commissioners, 'are empty and almost silent during the night, presenting a very different aspect from that of the daytime.' The corporation deemed it right, in order to determine the number, to take a day census. They found that in addition to the ordinary sleeping population, the mercantile men engaged daily in the City amounted to more than a hundred and seventy thousand. We may add that this number is increasing rapidly every year; and that the census of 1881 will probably tell us that the sleeping inhabitants are less and less. Ordinary dwelling-houses are being pulled down in great blocks, to make room for warehouses, insurance and Companies' offices, banks, new streets, and gigantic railway stations—compelling the hitherto resident inhabitants to seek abodes elsewhere.

It may perhaps be of interest to know that, at the date of the last census, about a hundred thousand of the Queen's British subjects were 'living beyond the seas;' and somewhat over sixty thousand in boats, barges, vessels on canals, rivers, &c. in coasting craft—augmenting the population of the British Islands to thirty-two millions in round numbers.

An unexpected difficulty presented itself thirty years ago, coming from a quarter that, it was hoped, would render important aid—namely, the clergymen and ministers of religious bodies. The Commissioners intrusted with the management of the census of 1851, said in their Report of the results: 'Religious parties of every denomination, in the estimates they have endeavoured to form of their comparative strength in this country, have hitherto felt the great disadvantage resulting from the absence of official returns on the subject of public worship. It has been attempted, by means of the information recorded by particular communities, in some measure to supply this deficiency; but the statistical information obtained by any one denomination has never been deemed authentic by any other. After all the efforts made by particular bodies, it has been found that the results have been of little practical value; not only because their accuracy was suspected, but also on account of their meagre and limited character. Now, however, for the first time in the history of this country, a census of religious worship has been obtained by the govern-

ment. We are now able to ascertain the entire number of places of worship, the particular sects to which they respectively belong, the number of sittings provided by each sect, and the actual attendance on a given day.' Alas! the attempt to give satisfaction only raised a storm. The government responding to appeals from various quarters, made the necessary arrangements; but when the Report appeared, all the denominations were discontented on one ground or other. The authorities deterred by these obstacles, made no similar attempt in 1861 or 1871.

We look forward with great interest to
THE CENSUS OF 1881.

SOPHIE: AN INTERLUDE.

IN TWO CHAPTERS.—CHAPTER II.

I GAVE up all idea of running away; but I did not confide my little adventure to either Severn or his wife, feeling that it was much better not to say anything about it. But I did hear of it before many hours had gone over my head; nay, before we met at dinner.

After tea, Mrs Severn called me to look at a new species of liliun which had just put forth its blossom in the greenhouse. I trembled like the guilty mortal I felt myself to be, for I knew what was coming. She said laughingly: 'So you have discovered the trick which we have been playing on you.'

I felt extremely sheepish, and looked it, I am sure; for she laughed good-humouredly, and went on: 'You are not the only one Sophie has taken in. Her impersonations are wonderful. She acted my grandmother to the life not long ago. We had a friend of Alfred's staying here, who is fully persuaded that my grandmother is the most wonderful old woman in the world. I must say, however, her little joke with you was purely unpremeditated. The accident of your finding her asleep gave rise to it all.'

I managed to get out some incoherent words of regret for what had happened; but Mrs Severn smiled. 'Sophie is quite aware that, having put herself in a false position, she must take the consequences,' she said; and we returned to the house.

At dinner we met. She swept into the room, a grown-up young lady, trailing two yards of cream-coloured satin after her, clad in the height of the fashion, apparently taller, and enchantingly pretty.

Severn took her hand. 'Walter,' he said, 'here is a young lady you used to know as a child.—Miss de Burgh, allow me to present my friend Mr Walter Dennis.'

She made me a sweeping courtesy; and I bowed low, feeling very foolish, and very much ashamed of myself. I scarcely dared to look into her face; but at last I ventured. There was just the least little twinkle in her wonderful eyes, as she glanced at me through her long lashes; and I knew I was forgiven.

That night, in the smoking-room, Severn said: 'So Sophie played her joke out. Silly child! She has learned a lesson.'

'And so have I,' I answered. 'But she completely deceived me. I had no idea she was anything more than a child of twelve or thirteen.'

'Luxmore thought her eighty or ninety. She is a wonderful little actress. But surely you saw the likeness'—Severn's voice broke—I knew at once to whom he alluded. He went on: 'She is wonderfully like poor Valérie. She was with us all through—nursed her. You never saw anything like it, sir; never seemed to require sleep or rest or anything. I don't know what I should have done but for her. We hope'—

The door opened before I heard what it was that Severn hoped—though I half suspected; and Alfred, who had been dining out, entered the room; and Harry, with bursts of laughter, told how at last I was undeceived, and how entirely taken in I had been. I must say Alfred was never very cordial with me. I was ten years his senior, and perhaps I lorded it over the young fellow. Once I fancied he was jealous of Sophie's manner to me.

For a day or two I treated her with the most ceremonious politeness; but afterwards we glided into an easy familiarity very sweet to remember. She laid aside her childish frocks, but did not lay aside her charming childish manner. Of course I called her Miss de Burgh; but sometimes 'Sophie' came so naturally to my lips, I could not refrain from calling her so. Perhaps—but I hope not—she really did care for me. Be that as it may, we were great friends. She discovered that I loved Shakspeare and Spenser and all the quaint old-world poets. So many a happy hour passed by on golden wings while we sat and read together.

About this time—I had been nearly two months at the Elms—Alfred left us for a while. I fear we did not miss him overmuch, although I observed a cloud upon Sophie's usually sunny face more than once; but when I rallied her about 'grief for Alf's departure,' she blushed furiously, and ran off. Harry Severn grew kinder, if possible, to me; and Mrs Severn treated me as if I were one of the family.

Poor Alfred! Long before he left, I saw how much he loved Sophie. No wonder. She was one any man must love. But I am not sure she ever manifested anything more than sisterly kindness to him. One thing I do remember—she never played any of her pranks on him, but rather, I think, avoided him.

But I must hasten to the winding up of my sweet Interlude. Summer was gliding into autumn. I had entered upon the third month of my stay at the Elms, prolonging my visit to a most unreasonable length. I therefore determined to leave in a few days, go abroad for two months, return to London at Christmas, spend the remainder of my leave between Lucy's house and Severn's, and return to India in the spring. I must acknowledge that I felt not a little melancholy at the prospect of bidding my loved friend and his household farewell; but it must be done. I had a long, dreary, desolate future to face, and the sooner I quitted the oasis I had found, the better fitted I should be for my solitary lot. And yet—and yet—

Might I not lure this beautiful bird, this child-woman, to fly with me, and make bright and beautiful that future, so dreary in prospect now? May I plead guilty to having asked myself that question once?—once only. It fell upon this wise. One delicious balmy September afternoon, we were

walking through the pleasure-ground together, Sophie and I. She was graver than her wont when we set out on our stroll. Alfred was to return that evening. I had dropped a word about a speedy departure, at luncheon; a word which Mrs Severn loudly declaimed. I was thinking of a thousand things, and silent. She walked by my side silent and thoughtful too. At last, a bird carolled merrily overhead and broke the spell. She laughed her old merry child-like laugh, and we began to chat away much as usual.

Quite suddenly she turned, laid both her little hands upon my arm, lifted up those eloquent, wonderful eyes of hers to my face, as if to read my inmost soul, and said: 'Mr Dennis, what is the trouble you have deep down? You laugh and are merry upon the surface; but within, you have always a settled grief. What is it?'

How could I answer her? I tried to pass the question by; but she would not suffer it. 'No, no!' she persisted. 'You won't baffle me. Will you tell me?' She coloured slightly, and hung her head. 'Tell me, is it anything about—money?'

'Remotely, money is the cause,' I answered.

'Oh, can money mend—can money put it away?' She betrayed great agitation, and was flushed and pale by turns.

I could not imagine what had agitated her so strangely. I took the little hands in mine—she was still a child to me—and said: 'Why do you ask me that, my dear?'

'Because—because—I have too much, far too much money for a little girl. Oh! you don't know how much I have; and—couldn't you take some of it, and get rid of your trouble?'

I looked down into the sweet anxious face uplifted to mine; and a fancy that she might fill the aching, empty heart to which she stood so close, with light and sweetness, and the desolate life with bloom and sunshine, shot through my brain; but I put it from me—at least I resolved to consider the question before I said or did anything definite. 'Dear child,' I said, 'if money at first caused my trouble, it is, alas! beyond the power of money to cure it now.'

'Do you think it cannot be cured?' She had hung her head, and cast her beautiful eyes to the ground.

'Time only can cure me. My dear, when I come back again, and find you in your own home—when you have discovered that your fortune is not too much to give to the man you love, then I will tell you all my sorrow, and you will see how hard it was to cure.'

She lifted up her eyes and looked at me steadily. She had removed her hands from my arm and stood up alone, her eyes looking straight into mine with the strangest expression in them I had ever seen. Was it reproach? Was it surprise? Was it pain unspeakable? Whatever it was, it made my heart beat quick.

Before I had time to speak, I heard a footstep on the gravel behind. She looked past me and cried: 'Oh, you good Alfred, do come and fetch me into the house, I am so tired!'

Then I saw Alfred Severn, who had just returned, take her on his arm, and go towards the house; she walking erect, her head thrown back, her hand clinging to his arm, he bending above her tenderly. She was laughing gaily, and even a snatch of a

song came wafted on the still September air. I must say I felt ill at ease with myself and my surroundings all that day.

We met at dinner. She was gay as a lark, her little face red as a rose, her eyes shining like stars. Besides, she was much more easy and intimate in her manner to Alfred than I had ever seen her before; she joked and jested, mimicked one or two of our acquaintances, was the life and soul of us all. After dinner, she sang for us, her bird-like voice trilling and warbling deliciously.

Next morning, shall I ever forget the quick rush of blood to brain and brow—the sudden throb of agonised surprise when I saw that letter which changed my fate, lying upon my plate at breakfast-time! I remember clutching it up and flying to my room, not to read, only to wonder over it. How well I knew the bold firm characters! How every dot and line made my heart thrill! The vague indefinable perfume which hung around the letter. The monogram, J. E. M., which I knew so well. A letter from Juliet—from London! I sat speechless in my room, dreading to open it and learn the truth. At last I found courage, and tore it open. It was dated from a West End Hotel, and was only a line:

'Walter, I am in London. Come to me.—JULIET.'

I forget how I said good-bye at the Elms. I think I told Severn some incoherent nonsense. I found myself at the station by some means or other; and in an hour I had my beloved clasped to my heart. She had a long story to tell. I will relate it briefly. I would not tell it, only that I feel it justifies my subsequent conduct. She was free. She had been most cruelly coerced by her relatives from first to last; the miserable half-witted Viscount, upon whom they were thrusting her, persecuting her with unwelcome attention; her father's affairs in a tottering condition; her step-mother railing at her from morning until night. She wavered, for very peace-sake, and consented to become the peer's wife, to save her father. Just a week before the day fixed for the wedding, a well-known bank failed, dragging down many commercial houses in its fall, Mr Morewood's amongst the number. Thereupon Lord Rathalan's yacht got up steam, and vanished in the night. The next day, Mr Morewood died of apoplexy, they said; but I knew from Juliet's face the real truth—by his own hand. Juliet took what portion of goods remained for her—a very scanty one—and came to me, penniless, well-nigh heart-broken, but still my own true love, my Queen of Women.

Before I left her, she had promised to be mine at once. The lady and gentleman with whom she had travelled home, arranged to stay in London until all could be settled; and half delirious with happiness, I almost forgot my friends at the Elms.

I wrote a long letter to Severn, however, telling him the happy sequel of my love-story. Strange to say, I received no answer. So, just before I was married, I resolved to run down and bid them good-bye at the Elms; and I confess I wished my interview with Sophie well over. Yet why? I had done nothing for which I ought to blush, I reasoned with myself.

To my amazement, the gates were locked, the house shut up. Only an elderly woman, grim

and sour to look upon, appeared at a side-door in answer to my ringing of the bell. She told me: 'The family 'as gone abroad'—to Paris or France, or might be Germany. She wasn't used with foreign parts. The master's address was at the office. If I wanted it, I could get it there.

I explained to her how I had forgotten some books and papers in my hurried departure some time since; and with evident reluctance, she admitted me. Even the few days' neglect and desertion had sadly altered the beautiful lawn and terraces. It was now mid-autumn. An early frost had scorched and blackened the blooming parterres. Fallen leaves bestrewed the unmown turf. The bright geraniums had been removed from the porch; and a long trailer, covered with rosebuds, frost-nipped before their time, swayed loosely in the freshening wind across the library window. A chill of sadness and desolation struck upon my heart. My grim companion unlocked the door. I entered—under protest, as it seemed. A small *douceur*, however, improved the temper of my cicerone, and I cross-questioned her to some effect. The Severns' departure had been strangely sudden. Only a day's preparation had preceded it. They were, however, to spend the whole winter abroad. They would be a great loss to the poor; they were all so good, 'specially Miss Sophie.

With an inexplicable feeling of regret—nay, self-reproach—I entered my room. It was just as I had left it; my books and papers laid neatly together. One book only was out of its place—a volume of Browning's poems. It lay open on my dressing-table, a withered rose upon the page. I bent and read one stanza which was underlined:

Never any more,
While I live,
Need I hope to see his face
As before.

I put back the dead flower, and closed the book. I have never opened it since. Poor little Sophie!

In a few days I was married. In a fortnight I was in Switzerland with my wife. I wrote to Severn from Basle; but I suppose the letter never reached him, as I had no reply. In the spring we went back to India, the happiest pair on earth. I have been truly blest in my noble wife; but—shall I confess?—I often remember Sophie, and wish I could hear of her, and wonder if we ever are to meet again.

I wrote the above more than a year ago, when my life's cup seemed full to overflowing and not a cloud dimmed the sky. I write the sequel to-day, a lonely, worn-out man, with no tie left upon earth save my motherless babe. A month ago, I returned from India, a broken-hearted widower. Lucy has tried to console me. Childless herself, my dear sister has taken the poor orphan to her heart, and watches over him with a mother's care. 'But, dear me, Walter,' she said yesterday, 'you will be sure to marry again. There is your friend Harry Severn, how inconsolable he was after the death of his first. See how happy he is now with his second.'

Severn? His name recalled much to my memory. That very hour I visited him at his office. He received me at first, as I thought,

coldly; but when I told him of my great sorrow, the man's kindly nature asserted itself; he became friendly and affectionate as ever. There was a subject I longed to ask him about, a name I longed to pronounce, yet dared not.

As I rose to leave, he said: 'I won't ask you to the Elms, Walter. Mary could not bear it. She has never been quite herself since'—

'Since what?' I asked eagerly, my heart sinking strangely.

Severn looked at me in dumb surprise for a moment or two; then he said: 'Can it be possible you have not heard'—

'What?' I gasped, clutching at the back of my chair.

He looked fixedly at me, and said slowly: 'About Sophie?'

'I have heard nothing. For God's sake, what of her?' I could not pronounce her name.

'Dead!'

The room spun round. I sunk into a chair overwhelmed.

Severn stood before me looking solemnly in my face. 'She faded from us,' he said in a voice husky with emotion, 'like a flower. One day she would rally, the next decline. It lasted for a year. We did all we could—took her everywhere. But no use. She drooped away, and died in autumn—a year after you left us.' He paused and wiped his eyes. My own overflowed; I could not speak. He went on: 'Our happy home is altogether broken up. Alfred could not bear to stay in England after—he lost her. You know how much he loved her, and how we hoped they would come together; and how—that was all put an end to. He has gone to Rio. I have opened a business there, of which he has taken charge. Emily Rufford belongs to a Sisterhood. She works very hard. Only Mary and I are left.'

I have been to her grave in the beautiful country churchyard. Some kindly hand has made it bright with flowers. A wreath and cross of snow-white blossoms are laid above the warm, loving heart, now still and cold for ever; and a memory of what was, and what might have been, keeps green within my heart a thousand tender recollections.

IN THE TEMPLE.

ENTER the Temple whichever way you will out of Fleet Street, and your foot is at once on ground which, though full of interest on account of its associations with historical personages, is nevertheless but little known to most Londoners, and to none more so perhaps than to the majority of those whose daily occupations lie within its precincts.

In the rooms above the gateway nearest to where stood Old Temple Bar, there lived for many years a state prisoner in the person of Sir Amyas Pawlett, not the least of whose titles to distinction is that he once put Cardinal Wolsey in the stocks when that eminent personage was still only parson of Lymington. By way of revenge, when Wolsey attained to power, he sent for Sir Amyas to London, and forbade him on pain of death to leave the boundaries of the city without permission. In those days, Wolsey's word was all-powerful; so Sir Amyas made the best of it, and

whether from design or not, getting as near as he possibly could to the confines of the city, took up his abode in rooms over Middle Temple gateway, where he amused himself, and at the same time endeavoured to propitiate his enemy, by decorating the walls of his abode with the armorial bearings and other insignia of the great Cardinal.

Passing under this gateway, the passenger finds himself in the narrow thoroughfare of Middle Temple Lane; to the left of him a few houses with overhanging gables, now about the most ancient in the Temple, and in one of which (No. 3) the Lord Chief-Baron Kelly is said to have had his first set of chambers so long ago as 1824. To the right are the buildings which form an addition to Child's Bank, where Nell Gwynn kept her banking account, and where are still to be seen receipts under the hand of that frail fair one. This addition is on the site of the old *Devil Tavern*, which was a favourite haunt of Ben Jonson and other wits and poets of the seventeenth century. Further down the Lane, and still on the right, is Brick Court, in which, at No. 2, second floor, lived Oliver Goldsmith; and immediately opposite is a low archway, leading through Pump Court into Inner Temple Lane, where for five years (1760-65) Dr Johnson had his chambers. His name remained inscribed on the doorpost till a few years ago, when the house was pulled down, to give place to the new one, now known as Johnson's Buildings. Farrar's Buildings, in the same Lane, was the residence of Boswell, who was thus within a stone's-throw of his idol. It is no very difficult effort of imagination, as we pass under the ancient archway that leads out of this Lane into Fleet Street, to fancy we see the forms of the three friends sauntering home after a jovial night spent at the neighbouring *Rainbow*, or issuing out at three o'clock in the morning for the *frisk* immortalised in the pages of Boswell.

At No. 4 in this Lane too, lived Charles Lamb, the back windows of whose chambers looked on Hare Court, the trees in which were in those days so luxuriant that, to use his own words, 'it was like living in a garden.' The gentle kindly 'Elia' was a native of as well as a dweller in the Temple, having been born in Crown Office Row, which faces the Inner Temple Gardens, about which, whilst yet a boy, we can fancy him watching the Benchers, those Dons of the Inns of Court, promenading to and fro; and thus affording him material for his future essay, 'Some Benchers of the Inner Temple.' Fenced round by an iron railing in this garden—all honour to the present Benchers for their reverent care—are the remains of the thorn planted by Oliver Goldsmith; but the walk by the river-side is gone, being now separated from it by the Thames Embankment. On one side of this garden is the modern successor to the old Paper Buildings, where, in a top story, looking on the gardens, Selden lived; and here also Fox Maule, of sarcastic memory, had his chambers. The old buildings were burnt down about forty or fifty years ago, owing, as some assert, to the inadvertence of a wine-bibing Bencher of those days, who retiring to rest after a night spent in the consumption of his favourite liquor, carefully placed his shoes on the chair beside him, whilst he put the lighted candle under the bed. Readers of Shakespeare will recollect that the poet makes the

Temple Gardens the scene of the choice of the red and white roses as their insignia by the rival factions of York and Lancaster.

But the brand-new buildings recently erected for chambers, and which, both by their material and by their pretentious style, appear to our minds so incongruous among these 'Brick towers, whilom,' as Spenser sings, 'went the Templar knights to bide'—make us glad to quit the gardens, and to wander back through King's Bench Walk, where Mr Murray, afterwards Lord Mansfield, once had chambers; and past the New Inner Temple Hall to the church, which stands almost immediately opposite to Johnson's Buildings. The curious circular nave of this church was built by the Templars in 1185, after the model of one still more ancient, which they forsook when they migrated from the other side of the Strand. The name of 'Temple' had its origin in the fact that the quarters allotted to the order in King Baldwin's palace at Jerusalem were close to the ruins of the Temple; and hence in England, as elsewhere, the Knights designated their residences Temples. The choir, in the Early English style, was completed about 1240; and here, near the altar, the learned Selden was buried in 1654; whilst outside its walls, on the 9th April 1774, were committed to the grave the mortal remains of Oliver Goldsmith. In the circular nave—or 'Round,' as it was called in former days—the barristers belonging to the Inns received their clients, each having his particular post, as nowadays merchants have their stands on 'Change.

The cloisters, immediately facing the church, burnt down in 1678, and rebuilt by Sir Christopher Wren, were the acknowledged resort of the students. After the fire, the Benchers of the Middle Temple desired to abolish these cloisters altogether, and to build chambers on their site. The Benchers of the Inner Temple, however, opposed the scheme with much warmth; and gained their point, aided by the Attorney-general of the day, who read the Middle Templars a severe lecture on their inhuman proposal to oust the students from the only place where they could assemble to discuss doubtful matters of law. As far back as the reign of Henry VIII., we learn from a contemporary account of the Middle Temple, that the question as to where the students—or as they were then termed, the *clerks commons*—might be properly accommodated, was one which troubled the breasts of the authorities not a little. Now their wants in this respect are well provided for in the libraries attached to each Inn, both of which contain a splendid collection of law-books. From the account already referred to, we glean some curious information as to the manners and customs of lawyers in these days. 'The House' of the Middle Temple, it tells us, 'was governed by a Treasurer annually chosen by the Elders or Benchers, and his auctoryte is to assign to such as are of the fellowship their chambers or lodgings;' to collect of 'certain of the fellowship a tribute yerely of iijs. iijd. [3s. 3d.] apiece, and to receive a rent of certain chambers;' also 'to pay of the said money the rent due to the Lord of St John's for the house they dwell in.'

The fellowship was divided into two companies—(1) The *Clerks Commons* or students already alluded to; (2) the *Master Commons*. This second company was further subdivided into three com-

panies—No-utter Barristers, Utter Barristers, and Benchers. The no-utter barristers were 'such as because they did not study or profit in lernyng, are not by the elders called upon to dispute or argue some doubtful matter of law, which among them is called motyng.' The utter barristers were those 'who had profited by study,' and who had continued in the house for five or six years, and who were called upon to dispute at the motyngs or moots—a word derived from the French *mot*. It should be mentioned that these arguments were carried on in what one authority terms 'homely law French,' which we may take it was somewhat near akin to the French spoken 'atte Bowe,' alluded to by the poet Chaucer. The moots of the Middle Templars were conducted in their Hall, which has remained virtually unaltered, and presents the same appearance as when first built in 1572.

But the lawyers of those days were not forgetful of the homely proverb as to the results of 'all work and no play,' and at certain stated periods in each year held in this Hall feasts, which they termed 'solemn revels,' at which the judges and sergeants-at-law were often invited guests, and where eating and drinking formed no small portion of the amusements. All such as were 'in commons' at the time were expected to attend, and absentees were fined iij*s.* iij*d.* (3*s.* 3*d.*); whilst barristers and students who were present, and refused to carry up beer to the Benchers' table, rendered themselves liable to fines varying in amount according to their degree. It may surprise modern readers to hear that those grave and reverend seniors were not above delighting themselves and each other with specimens more or less graceful of the Terpsichorean art; and not only the students and barristers, but the very Benchers themselves would favour the company with a minuet, or whatever was its Elizabethan equivalent, as well as with a song. It was in this Hall, on the 2d February 1601, that Shakspeare's play of *Twelfth Night* was first acted by Shakspeare himself; and it is much to the credit of the Benchers of this learned society that on the same day in this year, the two hundred and seventy-ninth anniversary of this interesting event was celebrated by the recital of this same play by that able and talented expositor of Shakspeare, Mr S. Brandram.

The interior of this ancient building is well worthy of inspection. From and even before the date of its erection, 'the Readers' of the Inn—whose office, now merely honorary, was originally to preside over the moots—were privileged to have their heraldic insignia emblazoned on the oak panels, now nearly black with age, which skirt the Hall; a privilege of which they have pretty freely availed themselves from 1540—the date which appears on the earliest of these shields, and which was presumably transferred from the old Hall—down to the present year. The windows also contain the armorial bearings of several of the sovereigns and other royal personages, including those of the Prince of Wales, who is a Bencher of the Inn. The screen at the entrance of the Hall, and which serves to support a gallery, is said to be made out of wood from some of the wrecked ships composing the Spanish Armada. In this Hall, during a limited number of days in term-time, the students eat those dinners which for centuries have been looked upon as in some mysterious

way forming the best—at one time indeed, the only—qualification for a call to the Bar, and to which they are summoned a few minutes before six o'clock by the 'panyer man' blowing a silver horn.

And now, passing out of the Hall, we find ourselves in Fountain Court. Between two broad flights of steps—one leading down to the Embankment, the other up into New Court—stands on a broad terrace, shaded on all sides by trees, the stone fountain from which the Court takes its name; the most picturesque spot, as some one has said, in all London. Here it will be remembered Ruth Pinch used to pause for a moment or two on her way homewards, in the hope of being joined by her brother, honest Tom; and here, listening to the plash of the water under the shade of the trees, with the quiet semi-monastic-looking buildings on all sides of him, the gardens at his feet, the river in the distance, we will take leave of our reader, assuring him of the fact—which amidst the silence of his surroundings he may be apt to forget—that the busy Strand and Fleet Street are actually within but a stone's-throw of the place where he stands!

MRS FITZPATRICK'S DIAMOND RING.

TWELVE months ago last November, I ran down into Warwickshire to spend a few days with my cousin Horace Mason. It was an odd time of year to choose for a country visit; but as a matter of fact I did not choose it—it was chosen for me. Until that year, I had always managed to get away for an eagerly snatched and greedily enjoyed holiday in August, and had generally been lucky enough to secure some good grouse-shooting or pleasant yachting. But all at once the Fates turned perverse, and that particular August had brought with it a throng of professional engagements which could be neither dismissed nor delayed. Of course they were welcome in a way; for I was near the bottom of the ladder, and was glad of any chance that would enable me to mount one or two rungs higher; but I certainly thought that the fickle goddess Fortune, having apparently forgotten me so long, might have postponed her visit for another month without any marked impropriety. The worst of it was that when September came I was as busy as ever, and even October found me still in the whirl of that Maelstrom of work.

Not until the morning of the first day of November did I waken with the blessed consciousness that the load was gone from my shoulders, and that I was once again comparatively free. I lay awake in bed, feeling serenely happy, wondering whether I ought to celebrate my emancipation by having my breakfast brought up to me, and vaguely speculating as to how and where I should give myself the holiday I had so fairly earned. I decided against the sybaritic breakfast in bed; rang my bell, and informed my landlady that I should be down-stairs in twenty minutes; and on entering my snug little sitting-room, found on the table a solitary letter. I digested the kidney and it together, and they were both eminently satisfactory. The former was perfect—Mrs Higgins had been a cook—and the latter was equally to my taste. It was from Horace Mason, who said he was completely bored—Horace is always complaining of being bored, though no

one enjoys life more than he—and that he would be eternally grateful to me if I would sacrifice myself by coming to share his boredom for two or three weeks. This was the very thing. Winthorpe, though only a bachelor establishment, was a most delightful house to stay at; and as it was surrounded by other houses almost equally delightful, the inhabitants of which understood well the great art of enjoying themselves, I need hardly say that I accepted the invitation by return of post.

Three days later, shortly after six in the afternoon, I was met at the door of Winthorpe by Horace himself, who as usual assured me, in tones which seemed symptomatic of perfect health and spirits, that he was more bored than ever, and that he would never, never forget the good turn I had done him by coming so soon. Of course, as *Pinafore* was then in the ascendant, I was bound to raise my eyebrows and inquire: 'What, never?' and he, to shew that his boredom was tempered by news of the great world, was ready with the orthodox reply: 'Well—hardly ever.' These highly intellectual greetings being exchanged, I was escorted up to my room, and then down to the drawing-room, where I found Mrs Patton, Horace's lady-housekeeper—his duenna, as he was wont to call her—and Mr Fitzpatrick, the rector of the parish. Mrs Patton, I knew well. She was a most amusing compound of dignity and jollity, and we were the best friends in the world, though she always declared that I did nothing but make fun of her. Mr Fitzpatrick I had never seen before; for during my previous visits he had always happened to be from home. He was a tall, portly, elderly gentleman, with a rather florid complexion, and a magnificent head of perfectly white hair, the effect of which was increased by a pair of bushy and perfectly black eyebrows. He greeted me very cordially; and as soon as we were seated at the dinner-table, I discovered that his forte was conversation and his foible monologue. I have heard some good steady talkers in my time; but I am prepared to back Mr Fitzpatrick against any of them. Reminiscence succeeded reminiscence, and anecdote jostled anecdote; and though he was undoubtedly very amusing, I began to think that if one lived in his parish, one might possibly have for him some of the feeling that Sindbad the Sailor had for the Old Man of the Sea. I have forgotten most of his stories; but one of them had a certain ghastliness, which impressed me a good deal at the time, and makes me think it worth telling again.

I had noticed during dinner that, as is the habit of some widowers, he wore a wedding-ring, which had presumably been his wife's; and over this another ring, of the kind usually worn by ladies, in which were set three very handsome brilliants. After dinner, when Mrs Patton had retired, the conversation somehow or other took a turn in the direction of precious stones, and Horace, who at last managed to get in a word or two, said something about the difficulty of distinguishing, in the absence of tests, a true stone from a really well executed imitation, and took from his waistcoat pocket a manufactured diamond which I certainly should have pronounced genuine. For purposes of comparison, Mr Fitzpatrick slipped from his finger the ring of which I have just spoken; and after it had been examined and

replaced, he said: 'There is a curious story connected with that ring, Mr Mason. I daresay you have heard it?'

'I've heard something about it,' said Horace; 'but I don't know all the particulars; and I don't think my cousin has heard anything of it.'

'Well, then,' said Mr Fitzpatrick, 'I may as well tell it you, if you care to hear it. The story begins and ends a long time ago. It is forty years this very month since I became engaged to be married. I was then a curate, and had not much money to spare; but I had just received a legacy of rather less than a hundred pounds; and in a fit of extravagance, hardly excusable even in a lover of five-and-twenty, I spent the whole of it and a few pounds more in purchasing a ring for my future wife. We expected the engagement to be a long one; but the rector of this parish died suddenly, and my great-uncle, in whose gift the living was, presented me to it. The rector's death took place in February. I read myself in on Easter Sunday; and on the first of June we were married. I suppose that every newly married husband and wife think themselves the happiest people in the world; but I honestly believe that we really were so. We had not only each other, but we had everything else that we could possibly desire—a larger income than we needed, work that was thoroughly congenial to both of us, a few real friends, any number of pleasant acquaintances, and an utter freedom from all anxiety.

'This unalloyed happiness lasted for six months, when my wife's health failed in a mysterious manner. She began to be subject to strange fits of languor, physical depression, and drowsiness, which gradually became longer and more frequent. I had advice at once; but the doctors seemed completely at sea. The organs, they said, were perfectly sound; and though the action of the heart was not quite so strong as it ought to be, there was absolutely nothing to account for the symptoms. At all events, they could only recommend tonics, gentle open-air exercise, and an occasional stimulant. In spite of them all, however, my wife grew worse and worse. At last she took to her bed; and she had not been in bed a week, when one evening I left her, apparently much the same as usual, and went into my study to spend a couple of hours over my next Sunday morning's sermon. I had been down-stairs only about three-quarters of an hour, when my wife's sister, who had been sitting with her during my absence, burst into the room and threw herself upon me, exclaiming: "O James! she's dead! Our darling Kate's dead!"

'You can imagine the shock she gave me; but it never occurred to me to imagine that what she said was really true. I thought nothing but that the strain of anxiety had been too much for the poor girl, and that she had temporarily lost her reason. I did my best to calm her; and soon succeeded, for she began to talk so lucidly, that I was compelled not only to listen but to heed. She said that she and one of the servants had been watching by my wife, who was apparently sleeping peacefully, when they had both been startled by a peculiar change in her countenance. They listened for the sound of her breathing; but heard nothing. They had then held a hand-mirror to her mouth; but it remained unclouded. They had felt for the pulsation of her heart; but

it had ceased to beat, and her body was deathly cold. The servant had gone to tell one of the men to saddle a horse and ride hard for the nearest doctor; while she had come to me to tell the terrible news and bid me be calm. Calm was out of the question. I tore myself away and rushed up-stairs. They were idiots—they were demented; but still there was a haunting fear which I must dispel for myself. And yet I was so sure that my wife could not be dead, that I summoned sufficient presence of mind to open the door gently and walk softly to the bed. I leaned over it, and said, not loudly, but distinctly: "Kate, darling, are you asleep?"

"But before I had spoken the last word, I was convinced. I had seen death often, and was sure that I knew it too well not to recognise it at a glance. I now shrieked instead of whispering; but there was no answer, and I flung myself full length upon the bed in voiceless agony. I must have become almost or entirely unconscious; for I never knew of the doctor's presence in the room until I felt his hand upon my arm. He said: "My dear Mr Fitzpatrick, you must try and bear it like a man and a Christian; for your wife is dead: she has been dead more than an hour."

"How I felt, I cannot tell you. I was prostrate with grief; and prostrate I remained for three days. The necessary preparations for the funeral were made by my wife's brother, and I really was unaware of what had been done. On the evening of the third day I heard stealthy footsteps ascending the stairs, and I felt rather than knew that they were the footsteps of the men who had come to close up the coffin. I heard the door open; then for a few minutes there was silence: and then I heard other and lighter footsteps descending, followed by a tap at the study door. I said: "Come in;" and when the door opened, I saw that it was an old nurse of my wife's, who had come to see her living, and had found her dead. "If you please, sir," she said, giving my wife the old familiar name, "they cannot get the rings off Miss Kate's finger; and they want to know what they must do."

"I had been apathetic; but in a moment I was enraged, and I shouted: "Leave them on!" in tones which made the poor woman beat a terrified retreat. I was completely unnerved by what seemed an outrage upon the remains that were so dear and so sacred to me; but I could not move to make a more effectual protest, and I soon sank into the lethargy from which I had been aroused. The night passed, as the preceding nights had passed, sleeplessly and wearily. I rose at dawn, and sat in the study until noon, when they came to tell me that the time for the funeral had come, and that I must follow my wife to her last home.

"You won't know the rectory well, Mr Browne," said Mr Fitzpatrick, addressing himself directly to me; "but you must have passed it. The front-door, as you will remember, opens to the turnpike road; but there is also another door with two glass panels which opens directly into the churchyard. My wife was in the habit of using this door very frequently; for there ran from it a path which crossed the churchyard and ended at a stile, which was just opposite the gates of the Grange, then rented by the Hardings, who were her oldest friends. When she had returned and found the door fastened, which sometimes happened, she

had been used to let me know she was there by a peculiar tap, and I had always gone to let her in. It was out of this door—which somehow seemed to belong to her, and out of which she had often tripped so gaily—that I followed her corpse; and as it was closed gently behind me, I think I fully realised for the first time what a changed thing my life must henceforth be. The service was gone through; I heard the clods fall upon the coffin; and I returned to the house that was now so awfully solitary. The vicar of the next parish, who had performed the last sad offices for my wife, returned with me, and tried his best to bring me to myself; but I refused to be comforted. At last he left me; and I was glad to be alone, for in solitude I could feel that my wife was somewhere near me.

"They brought me food; but I could eat nothing. The hours passed slowly; but I took no note of them. I did not even know that it was dark until one of the maids came and asked if she should light the lamp. I let her do it; and then mechanically took a book down from the shelves and tried to read. It was only a mockery of reading; but it acted as a sort of narcotic; and I had dropped into a doze, when I was aroused by a knocking at my door, sharp and decisive, as if the person knocking were not asking but demanding entrance. Just as the knock came, the clock struck twelve, and I knew that I must have been sleeping for nearly three hours. I got up from my chair, opened the door, and inquired what was wanted of me. Standing in the lighted hall were the three indoor servants and the old nurse: and the faces of all were absolutely blanched with terror. One of the girls, in an agony of fright, caught hold of my sleeve and panted out: "O sir, do come!"

"I shook her off somewhat roughly and, addressing the nurse, said: "What's the meaning of this?"

"She was clearly as frightened as the others, but more self-possessed, and she replied: "If you please, sir, Jane and Margaret say that their mistress is standing at the side-door, tapping on the glass; and that they will leave the house if you do not come and see."

"I called them fools, and bade them go to bed; but they crowded behind me as I hastily crossed the hall, and strode down the short corridor to the side-door. I approached the door; and I must confess that my blood ran cold as I distinctly heard the well-known tap, and thought I saw something white behind the glass panels. I turned my eyes to the bolt, which I drew back, and flung the door wide open. If I were to live for a millennium, I could never forget the sight I saw then. There stood my wife, with bright open eyes, a flushed face, dishevelled hair, and her night-dress stained with large patches of blood!

"James," she said; "don't be frightened; it is I." She may have said more; but this was all I heard. They told me that I gasped, "Kate, my Kate!" and fell down senseless.

"When I recovered consciousness, I found myself in bed. My wife, dressed as she was used to be dressed, was sitting by my side; and I looked around and wondered whether I had been awakened from some horrible nightmare. At last the reality of the events of the past few days came back to me—my wife's illness, her death, her strange return from the world of spirits. When

I summoned strength for the task, I asked what it all meant; and though she could tell but little, that little was enough to solve the mystery. She said she had felt as if she were being rather roughly awakened from sleep; and that when she became thoroughly aroused, she found she was sitting up in an open coffin at the bottom of a grave, with the blood running quickly from a deep cut in her ring-finger. The grave was shallow, and she had managed to climb out, when she discovered that she was not twenty yards from the door by which she was accustomed to enter the house. She made her way to it; and we knew the rest.

'It had been a curious case of trance, catalepsy, or whatever name men of science may give to these inexplicable simulations of death in which all the functions seem to be arrested while the vital principle remains intact. She had been restored to conscious animation by the cut given to her finger by the ruffian whose cupidity had tempted him to a deed from which many a hardy scoundrel would have shrunk. The perpetrator was of course one of the undertaker's men, who had been struck by the glitter of the gems in the diamond ring; and who, to obtain it, did not hesitate to violate the sanctity of the grave, and even to mutilate a corpse.'

'Good heavens!' I exclaimed, 'what an overpowering story. Was the rascal ever caught?'

'No; he disappeared, and nothing was heard of him.'

'And your wife? What effect had it on her?'

'Curiously enough, her general health became better from that dreadful day; but I think her nervous system must have received a permanent strain, for she entirely lost the physical courage which she had possessed in an extraordinary degree for a woman; and about two years afterwards she became subject to attacks of asthma, which is, I believe, a complaint that often has its origin in some nervous shock. She lived, however, to be over fifty, and was bright and cheerful to the last, though she had been a confirmed invalid for five years before her death.'

Mr Fitzpatrick ceased speaking for a while; and we were allowed to interject a few sentences of comment upon the remarkable story we had heard; but silence with him was never much more than a flash, and in ten minutes he was in the middle of another narration. We did not separate until after midnight; and I saw him again several times during my stay at Winthorpe, which was more than usually pleasant. He had certainly an inexhaustible fund of stories; but I did not hear one that was, in the current literary slang of the day, so thoroughly 'sensational' as the story of Mrs Fitzpatrick's Diamond Ring.

[The foregoing narrative, which is founded on an actual occurrence, is another illustration of the danger of interring a human being apparently dead, but in whom life may nevertheless still linger. To be buried alive is a contingency the very thought of which fills the mind with horror; and yet it is notorious that instances have occurred, and may yet occur, through neglect on the part of those in charge to use even the most ordinary precautions.

The subject is of such importance, that though it has been dealt with in these pages on previous

occasions, we gladly take this opportunity of again offering to our readers a few of the signs which usually distinguish actual from supposed death:—

The arrest of the pulse and the stoppage of breathing. No movement of the chest—no moist breath to dim a looking-glass placed before the mouth. These stoppages of pulse and breath may however, under certain conditions be reduced to so low an ebb, that it is by no means easy to decide whether or not they are *completely* annihilated. Cases too have been known in which the patient had the power of voluntarily suspending these functions for a considerable time. The loss of irritability in the muscles (a fact which may be readily ascertained by a galvanic current) is a sign of still greater importance than even the apparent stoppage of the heart or of the breath.

The contractile power of the skin is also lost after death. When a cut is made through the skin of a dead body, the edges of the wound close, while a similar cut made during life presents an open or gaping appearance.

An important change termed the *rigor mortis* takes place after death, at varying periods. The pliability of the body ceases, and a general stiffness ensues. This change may appear within half-an-hour, or it may be delayed for twenty or thirty hours, according to the nature of the disease. It must however, be borne in mind that *rigor mortis* is not a continuous condition; it lasts for twenty-four to thirty-six hours, and then passes away. Commencing in the head, it proceeds gradually downwards, the lower extremities being the last to stiffen; and disappears in the same order.

One of the most important of the various changes that indicate death is the altered colour of the surface of the body. Livid spots of various sizes occur, from local congestions during life; but the appearance of a green tint on the skin of the abdomen, accompanied by a separation of the cuticle or skin, is a certain sign that life is extinct. To these symptoms may be added the half-closed eyelids and dilated pupils; and the half-closed fingers, with the thumb turned in. It is important to note that the slightest motion of the heart may be detected by the stethoscope even though breathing and the pulse have ceased. If the heart, therefore, be silent to this delicate instrument, the vital spark has fled.—ED.]

G L O A M I N G.

FROM THE GERMAN OF GOETHE.

TWILIGHT downward softly floateth;

All, once near, seems dim and far;

High aloft now faintly gleameth,

Pale and clear, the evening star.

All in doubtful shadow quavers;

Up and up the slow mists creep;

Down, the lake, 'mid deepest darkness,

Mirroring darkness, lies asleep.

On the eastern sky appearing,

Lo! the moon, bright, pure, and clear;

Slender willows' waving branches

Sport upon the waters near.

Through the playful, flitting shadows,

Quivers Luna's magic shine;

Through the eye this freshness stealing,

Steals into this heart of mine. G. S. U.

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